

**Weekly Status & Information Report:
Week of January 15 - January 19, 2007**

1. Commercial Robberies in the City: At approximately 7:53 a.m. on Friday, January 19th, Takoma Park Police responded to the report of a commercial armed robbery at The Takoma Cleaners, located at 6917 Laurel Avenue. Takoma Park Detectives are investigating the possibility that the suspects in this incident are linked to two similar commercial armed robberies that occurred approximately 45 minutes earlier in Hyattsville, Maryland. Takoma Park Detectives are working closely with detectives from Montgomery County and Prince George's County, as well as the District of Columbia. Detectives are looking at the possibility that recent robberies that have occurred in the various jurisdictions are linked. The Department's Community Oriented Policing officers are working actively with the business community to keep store owners and operators informed of the occurrences and to provide advice as to what steps they can take to improve the security of their business. Patrol officers are being kept apprised of the most current information so that they may serve as the agency's eyes and ears in looking for potential suspect leads and protecting the community. *(City Manager/Police)*

2. Changes in Legislator Contact Information: There have been numerous recent changes to room and phone numbers of our legislators in Annapolis. Also, multiple errors have been found in the rosters on both the General Assembly website and the Montgomery Delegation website. Here's the updated information on our District 20 delegation: Senator Jamie Raskin, 122 James Senate Office Building, 301-858-3634, jamie.raskin@senate.state.md.us; Delegate Sheila Ellis Hixson, 131 Lowe House Office Building, 301-858-3469, sheila.hixson@house.state.md.us; Delegate Tom Hucker, 220 Lowe House Office Building, 301-858-3474, tom.hucker@house.state.md.us; Delegate Heather Mizeur, 219 Lowe House Office Building, 301-858-3493, heather.mizeur@house.state.md.us. In District 47, in adjacent Prince George's County, please note that Victor Ramirez has moved to Room 430 in the Lowe House Office Building. Staff is trying to learn his new phone number and then will share the information. The other District 47 information appears to be correct on the General Assembly roster. *(Community & Government Liaison)*

3. Upcoming County Public Hearings: A number of important public hearings and forums have been set by the County Executive and County Council: County Executive's Public Forum on FY08 Budget, Jan. 23, 7pm, Long Branch Community Center, 8700 Piney Branch Road; County Executive's Town Hall Meeting, Jan. 24, 7:30pm, Northwood High School, 919 University Blvd; County Council Public Forum on Montgomery County's Transportation Priorities, Jan. 25, 7:30pm, Council Office Building, 3rd Floor Hearing Room, 100 Maryland Ave, Rockville; County Council Public Hearing on Expedited Bill 1-07, Condominiums - Conversion of Rental Housing - Extended Tenancies, Feb. 6, 1:30pm (call 240-777-7931 to sign up to testify at this hearing). For more information, go to the County website: www.montgomerycountymd.gov. *(Community & Government Liaison)*

4. Councilmember Meets with County Officials: On Wednesday, January 17th, Councilmember Joy Austin-Lane and Community and Government Liaison Suzanne Ludlow met with County officials to discuss municipal tax duplication, the Takoma Metro project, the Community Center gymnasium, and a number of other issues. County officials attending the meeting were Connie Latham, Special Assistant to the County Executive; Sandra Brecher, Administrator, Dept. of Public Works and Transportation;

and Lisa Rother, Planning Manager, Office of the County Executive. (*Community & Government Liaison*)

5. Save the Date - Public Workshops on Gym: Saturday, February 10 and Sunday, February 11 are the dates set for two identical free community workshops regarding the proposed gymnasium addition to the Takoma Park Community Center. The workshops will be held from 2:30 - 4:30pm. The Saturday workshop will be at Grace United Methodist Church on New Hampshire Avenue and the Sunday workshop will be at the Takoma Park Community Center. The Sunday session will include a track in Spanish. Information on this important event will be mailed to each household in Takoma Park. We want to know what you think! For information as it becomes available, check the City's web site at www.takomaparkmd.gov. (*Community & Government Liaison*)

6. Maple Avenue Project (Ward 4): 16 Maple trees were planted on the section of Maple Avenue from Philadelphia Avenue to Sherman Avenue. (*Public Works*)

7. Stormwater Project (Ward 2): Work continues on the installation of a new storm inlet and stormline on Elm Avenue from Lincoln Avenue to Auburn Avenue. (*Public Works*)

8. Voting on Snapshots: The video "Your Vote Counts: Introduction to Instant Runoff Voting" is airing on City TV as part of the January 2007 Snapshots. It is also posted separately on the City web site, with a link on the front page with the Election information. (*City TV*)

9. On Air: City TV staff covered the annual Martin Luther King Jr. Birthday Celebration last Friday. It will be edited and start airing in February. Staff also covered the Poetry Series on January 18th featuring Rhonda Williford and Maria Mazzenga sponsored by the Arts and Humanities Commission. Newly released videos include: Street Festival 2006: Robert Lighthouse Blues Band + Junkyard Saints; Folk Festival #13: Janie Meneely + Alan Jabbour; Folk Festival #14 - Cheick Diabate + Future Shock; Special Events: Street Festival: Shosho + The Sherwood Blues Band (*City TV*)

10. The PEG Network: Staff attended the January PEG Network meeting with included an introductory meeting with newly elected Councilmember Duchy Trachtenburg who now serves as chair of the MFP Committee (which has oversight of all cable/telecommunications regulation). (*City TV*)

11. New Designers: As noted in the last Newsletter, longtime design studio Sligo Press has changed its business model and will no longer be producing the City newsletter. A new newsletter designer has been contracted to perform this service, Electronic Ink of Leesburg Virginia. This firm will be producing the February 2007 issue. (*City TV*)

12. Web Site: The main page has been reorganized into News, Events, Projects, E-Links and Quick Police News to help visitors find items more easily. Candidate information has been posted to the website (links from front page). (*City TV*)

13. Welcome Design: Communications Office staff finalized graphic design of the ad which runs in the Quality Inn's "Welcome" flyer distributed to hotel guests. (*City TV*)

14. SPAM: The following notice will be posted on the website and in the City Newsletter regarding problems with spam: "Those of us who use e-mail on a regular basis are all too familiar with the increasing amount of spam which hits our e-mail boxes on a daily basis. Offers for mortgages, pills, and untold riches, among other nonsense, fill up e-mail boxes for business and residential customers alike. The City of Takoma Park is not immune to this phenomenon.

The City's Information Systems team has spent countless hours adjusting spam filters and implementing new software to help staff receive the email which is required for daily work, and not be inundated with unnecessary and offensive spam. Some spam gets through, regardless, as the spammers are very clever. Worse, some important email does not get received or delivered, leaving sender and receiver frustrated.

Recently, City staff have been especially dismayed that emails sent by staff have not been received by the intended recipients, even when responding to a sent email. In particular, we have identified problems sending or receiving from correspondents at the RCN/Starpower, Verizon and Sprintmail domains, but there is little doubt other domains are impacted. Sometimes these emails "bounce," and the sender gets a notice, but sometimes they just disappear with no notice to either party.

Prompt customer service is very important to the staff of the City of Takoma Park. Please pick up the phone and give us a call at 301-891-7100 if you haven't received a response to an email within a business day or two of sending it. We may not be ignoring you, we may not have received your message or you may not have received ours!" (*City TV*)

15. Officers in Training: From January 10-11, D/Sgt. Poole, D/Cpl. John and Det. Conrad attended a DNA collection and processing seminar sponsored by the Department of Justice in Rockville, Maryland. On Tuesday, January 16, Capt. Coursey attended a Homeland Security Grants meeting at the Montgomery County Homeland Security Office. From January 18-19, Cpl. Rodriguez and Pvt. Quante attended Highway Vehicle Stop and Drug Trafficker training sponsored by the Maryland State Police, Training Division, Sykesville, Maryland. From 18-19 January, Ms. Lakya Coles attended Property and Evidence Custodian training at the Montgomery County Park Police Headquarters. (*Police*)

16. Recruiting in the Department: Last week, the recruiting section conducted oral interview panels for Communications Dispatcher applicants. This week, five of those applicants were selected to move into the background investigation phase of the application process. Two dispatcher positions are currently vacant. This week, the recruiting section conducted oral interview panels for Police Recruit Applicants. Six candidates passed their oral interviews and will be evaluated for assignment into the background investigation phase. Two sworn positions are currently vacant. (*Police*)

17. Vehicle Enforcement (Wards 1, 4, and 5): Officers conducted at least 44 traffic stops this week, 36 of which ended in written citations. More than half of the stops were made on New Hampshire, Flower and Philadelphia Avenues. (*Police*)

18. Tenant Opportunity to Purchase (Ward 4): Tenants residing at 7716-7720 Maple Avenue, a 20 unit rental property, received notice on December 22, 2006 that their property is being sold by Adventist HealthCare, Inc. A third party contract for \$1,100,000

is pending. The tenants met with Mario Cristaldo, the city's Community Organizer, on January 16 and have formed a tenant's association. A second meeting will be held next week with the organizers to explore options open to the tenants in regard to the Tenant Opportunity to Purchase law. *(Housing and Community Development)*

19. Rent Stabilization Discussion Resumes (City-wide): City Council has resumed its discussion of the Rent Stabilization law. The first meeting of the year took place on Tuesday, January 16. Dr. Kenneth Baar was present to elaborate on his recommendations for changes to the law which were previously presented to Council on November 20, 2006. The next council meeting to discuss the law is tentatively scheduled for February 5. The public is encouraged to attend or to view the telecasts on the city's website, www.takomaparkmd.gov *(Housing and Community Development)*

20. Takoma/Langley Crossroads Farmers Market (Ward 6): The Takoma Park Farmers Market received a grant this week from Project For Public Spaces to start a satellite market at the Takoma Langley Crossroads. Staff will work with the Farmer's Market to secure a site and coordinate City services. The new market will be held midweek and provide a positive gathering space for the community's diverse residents. The goal of the market is to provide the Crossroads area with fresh, locally grown food and to include new immigrant and minority farmers. The grant includes technical and financial assistance to minority and new immigrant farmers, and an EBT machine to provide options for low-income customers at both markets. *(Housing and Community Development)*

21. Erie/Flower Commercial Area Master Plan Workshop (Ward 5): The first Workshop to review the Master Plan and identify small scale improvements will be held February 22nd in the Columbia Room of Wilkinson Hall at Columbia Union College. Neighborhood residents, businesses and other area stakeholders are invited. The workshop will review the vision and recommendations of the 2000 Master Plan for the Erie/Flower Avenue Commercial area and work with participants to identify and prioritize small scale projects for the neighborhood commercial area. For more information please contact Ilona Blanchard, Senior Planner, at (301) 891-7205. *(Housing and Community Development)*